News Release
Communiqué

Ontario

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée

For Immediate Release
January 16, 2007
2007/nr-004

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS IN LONG-TERM CARE HOMES

Thousands Of New Staff Since 2004 Means Better Care For Residents

TORONTO – Almost 4,900 new staff – including 1,101 new nurses – have been hired since 2004 to provide quality care to residents as part of the McGuinty government's plan to improve the quality of life at long-term care homes, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"The McGuinty government is working to ensure our families and loved ones living in long-term care homes are cared for safely and with dignity," Smitherman said. "Having more staff in homes will give families and friends the confidence that residents are carefully looked after and that they are enjoying a higher standard of care."

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has increased funding to the long-term care home sector by $740 million on an annual basis. This has allowed the sector to increase the size of its workforce by 4,891, from 34,068 in January 2004 to 38,960 today. This includes 1,101 new nurses.

The Minister made the announcement on the same day that legislative hearings began on the proposed *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006*. The legislation was introduced last October and, if passed, would strengthen enforcement and improve care and accountability in the long-term care home sector. The proposed law builds on the government's achievements to date, including:

- Requiring a registered nurse to be on-site and on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Introducing surprise annual home inspections
- Introducing a toll-free Action Line for the public to register a complaint or concern with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
- Changing placement regulations to enable couples to be placed in the same long-term care homes more quickly.

"We have worked tirelessly to improve the health and quality of life of our residents living in long-term care homes," said Monique Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "The residents of our long-term care homes deserve the best possible care."

Highlights of the proposed *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006* include:

- Promoting zero tolerance of abuse and neglect of long-term care home residents
- Whistle-blowing protections for staff, residents and volunteers who report abuse or neglect
- Enshrining in legislation that a registered nurse be on duty in the home 24 hours a day, seven days a week

- Restricting the use of restraints to limited circumstances where it is absolutely necessary and only with appropriate safeguards
- Defining licence terms for long-term care homes of up to 25 years; licences can be revoked in cases of non-compliance.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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